

raised in New York City and following the September 11th attacks he, like so many patriots, enlisted in the Marine Corps in November of 2001.

Mike's operational assignments include Operations Chief and Senior Enlisted Leader for the Commander of the Special Operations Command and Control Element in Africa. He also deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan on numerous occasions between 2003 and 2017 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Inherent Resolve. As a Critical Skills Operator, or Marine Raider, Mike has been stationed in Camp Lejeune, NC; Camp Pendleton, CA; and Washington, D.C. and has traveled to over 30 countries. He served as the Chief instructor of an advanced technical operations course at the Marine Raider Training Center and is a graduate of the USMC Congressional Fellowship program; USMC Combatant Diver Course; USMC Amphibious Reconnaissance Course; USMC Scout Sniper Course; U.S. Army Airborne Course; U.S. Army Special Forces Military Freefall; and the U.S. Navy Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape Course.

Mike graduated Summa Cum Laude from Norwich University's Bachelor of Science in Strategic Studies and Defense Analysis program. He earned a master's degree in Public Administration and Policy from American University and a graduate certificate in Legislative Studies from Georgetown University's Government Affairs Institute in Washington, D.C. He also completed the Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education II and earned the Michael A. Monsoor Leadership Award from the Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Advisors Course. Mike's brave actions on the battlefield earned him a number of awards, including the Bronze Star Medal with Valor, Joint Service Commendation Medal (Combat), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, 3 Combat Action Ribbons, 2 Presidential Unit Citations, 7 Sea Service Deployment Ribbons, and 6 Marine Corps Good Conduct Medals.

With his robust, boots-on-the-ground experience serving our nation around the globe, I am honored now to have Mike as a member of my staff. Prior to serving as my national security advisor, Mike was the Chief of Staff for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense of Special Operations and Combatting Terrorism and the Appropriations Liaison to the Assistant Secretary of Defense from Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict in the Department of Defense, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy. On behalf of a grateful Nation, I thank Mike for his exemplary service in the United States Marine Corps.

#### COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF WINTER THE DOLPHIN

#### HON. CHARLIE CRIST

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 18, 2021*

MR. CRIST. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the passing of Winter the Dolphin, in celebration of her extraordinary life, and in honor of her home and family at Clearwater Marine Aquarium in my district.

After being rescued from a crab trap in December 2005, two-month-old Winter lost her tail and had to adapt to life without it.

But Winter didn't just survive. She thrived. And with a new prosthetic tail, her resilience inspired millions around the world—including many wounded and disabled veterans.

Winter's story became the inspiration for the movies *Dolphin Tale* and *Dolphin Tale 2*. And over her life, Winter provided hope to all who met her, and brought awareness to the plight of marine mammals.

Winter's legacy is one of perseverance, courage, and environmental stewardship.

#### HONORING THE 155TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FRANKLIN

#### HON. ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 18, 2021*

MR. SCOTT of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 155th anniversary of First Baptist Church of Franklin which has been a continuing source of inspiration for the community of Franklin, Virginia. The church was founded in 1866, a year after slavery was abolished in the United States. First Baptist Church of Franklin stands tall as the oldest organization of continuous existence in Franklin.

The beginnings of First Baptist Church of Franklin were one of hardship at the initial phase of the Reconstruction era. A young man of faith named Joseph Gregory was recommended to be a licensed preacher. Reverend Gregory was assigned a post to give the message of Christ to the African American members of this and other churches.

Through the following months, he started preaching in the little village of Franklin. He took initiative and organized the Cool Spring Baptist Church. The church started in a brush arbor near the Black Water River, which was donated by Tom Barrett, one of the church's members. Unfortunately, the brush arbor burned down but this did not stop the continuous work of the congregants. Under the leadership of the founding pastor, the members rebuilt and continued serving their community. Following the leadership of Reverend Gregory, First Baptist Church of Franklin has had a diverse succession of faithful servants, such as Reverend Guy Powell, Reverend M.E. Gerst, Dr. W.R. Ashburn, Reverend S.W. Timms, Reverend W.E. Sanderlin, Dr. M.C. Allen, Reverend Grover C. Lassiter, Reverend Samuel Franklyn Daly, Reverend Henry Blunt, Reverend Dr. Paige Chargois, Reverend Dr. D.S. Riddick, II and the church's current pastor, Reverend Marcus D. Jennings.

First Baptist Church of Franklin is still a pillar of the community. The organization's ministries bring essential services to the City of Franklin and its citizens. In these trying times, First Baptist Church of Franklin has shown resiliency and remains a source of inspiration for its congregants.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate the members and leaders of First Baptist Church of Franklin for their contributions to the City of Franklin for the last 155 years. The ongoing commitment to preach the gospel, give the good news and to extend faith is reflected in the rich history of the church. I commend pastor Marcus Jennings for his vision and service to his congregation, the community of Franklin, and the members of the congregation who

all make a community of faith possible. I wish the church many more years of growth and prosperity.

#### REMEMBERING NUNZIO MERLO

#### HON. TIM RYAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 18, 2021*

MR. RYAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of my friend, Nunzio Merlo, who passed away on Friday, October 17, 2021 at the age of 80.

He was born September 14, 1941 in Gioiosa Marea Sicily, Italy the son of Giuseppe and Tindara Stancampiano-Pizzo Merlo. He grew up in the mountains of Sicily with his three sisters and three brothers, his father (a sheep farmer and cheese maker) and his mother (a homemaker). Nunzio's time as a young man in Sicily was spent working as a tree trimmer and a taxi driver, and he enjoyed singing and playing guitar. He met the love of his life, Maria, in Gioiosa Marea when he was nineteen and she was seventeen. They married on August 12, 1962.

On November 13, 1965 Nunzio immigrated to America with his wife and two-year-old son to build a new life. He was always a hard worker and often worked two jobs. Nunzio was employed at National Gypsum, the same company my grandfather Rizzzi worked for, General Motors Lordstown, Tauro Brother's Trucking, and the U.S. Postal Service. He was also a self-employed truck driver. He retired after 17 years working for the City of Niles Water Department in 2015.

He was a member of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Niles, where he could always be found volunteering at the church festivals and Lenten fish dinners. It wasn't an event at Mt. Carmel unless Nunzio was working. He was a member of the Sons of Italy, Niles Democratic Club, Niles Knights of Columbus Council 1681, and he played in several bocce leagues.

Nunzio's dedication to family was at the heart of everything he did. He especially enjoyed cooking Sunday dinners for his family. Nunzio enjoyed gardening and playing Italian cards with family and friends and attending his grandchildren's extracurricular activities and events. His kind heart, willingness to help others and his infectious smile will live in the memories of family and friends forever. I can truly say, Madam Speaker, I would not be in Congress today if it wasn't for Nunzio Merlo and his family. They launched my career and I will forever be grateful.

He will be sadly missed by his wife of 59 years, Maria Calabrese Merlo, his father-in-law Tindaro Calabrese of Niles, four sons: Joseph Merlo and his wife Louise of Niles, Robert Merlo and his wife Jamie of Niles, Tino Merlo and his wife Michelle of Howland, and Giovanna Merlo and his wife Monica of Niles, two sisters: Maria Merlo of Gioiosa Marea Sicily Italy, and Rosa Merlo of Cefalu, Sicily, ten grandchildren: Giuseppe Merlo (Sarah Marlinski), Nicolette Merlo, Alenna Merlo, Nunzio Merlo, Roberto Merlo, Isabella Merlo, Gianna Merlo, Tino Merlo, Emma Merlo, and Giovanna Merlo. He is also survived by many loving nieces, nephews and cousins in the U.S. and Sicily.